

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CANBER 04678 150951Z
ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 AGRE-00 CEA-01 CIAE-00
COME-00 DODE-00 FRB-03 H-01 INR-10 INT-05 L-03
LAB-04 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 CTME-00 AID-05 SS-15
STR-07 ITC-01 TRSE-00 ICA-11 SP-02 SOE-02 OMB-01
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R 150643Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3547
INFO USMISSION GENEVA

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USMTN

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ETRD, AS
SUBJECT: RECOMMENDED DUTY INCREASES ON WOOD PRODUCTS

REF: (A) CANBERRA 02941, (B) STATE 097350

1. AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IS REACHING FINAL STAGES IN ITS
CONSIDERATION OF WHETHER TO INCREASE DUTIES ON IMPORTS OF
TIMBER AND TIMBER PRODUCTS. FINAL REPORT BY INDUSTRIES
ASSISTANCE COMMISSION (IAC) WAS FORWARDED TO DEPARTMENT OF
INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE ABOUT THE BEGINNING OF JUNE AND IS NOW
BEING CONSIDERED BY INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE. RUMORS ABOUND
AS TO WHETHER OR NOT DRAFT REPORT'S RECOMMENDATION OF DUTY
INCREASE TO 15 PERCENT WAS RETAINED IN FINAL REPORT AND
WHETHER INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION WILL BE
FORWARDED TO MINISTERIAL LEVEL THIS MONTH. EMBASSY IS
INCLINED TO CREDIT VERSION OF EVENTS WHICH INDICATES THERE
IS CONSIDERABLE DONNYBROOK GOING ON IN INTERDEPARTMENTAL
COMMITTEE AND THAT AS CONSEQUENCE PLYWOOD RECOMMENDATIONS ARE
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LIKELY TO BE SEPARATED OUT FOR PRIOR ACTION. TARIFF QUOTAS
ALREADY IN EFFECT ON PLYWOOD EXPIRE AT END OF JUNE, WHICH
NECESSITATES EARLY ACTION.

2. PRIOR TO IAC SUBMISSION OF FINAL REPORT E/C COUNSELOR AND
COMMATT MADE APPROACH TO DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND RESOURCES,
LEAVING TALKING POINTS PAPER FOR TRADE TO CIRCULATE TO

INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE. CANADIANS, WHO ENJOY COMMONWEALTH PREFERENCES, HAD EARLIER PRESENTED TRADE AND RESOURCES WITH AIDE MEMOIRE EXPRESSING VIEW THAT IAC OUGHT TO BE GIVING CONSIDERATION TO INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS, WHICH IT HAD NOT IN ITS DRAFT REPORT. CANADIAN ANALYSIS OF INDUSTRY SITUATION AND REASONS FOR NOT INCREASING DUTIES VERY CLOSELY PARALLELED PAPER DEVELOPED BY EMBASSY, AND CANADIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER LAST WEEK PRESENTED ABBREVIATED VERSION OF AIDE MEMOIRE TO MINISTER OF TRADE ANTHONY. EMBASSY ANTICIPATES MAKING APPROACH AT POLICY LEVEL AS INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE COMPLETES ITS DELIBERATIONS AND MINISTERS PREPARE TMVCONSIDER THE SUBJECT.

3. COMMENT: EMBASSY WOULD NOT BE AT ALL SURPRISED IF FINAL IAC REPORT WERE THE SAME AS DRAFT REPORT, RECOMMENDING 15 PERCENT DUTY ON TIMBER SPECIES IMPORTED FROM NORTH AMERICA. HOWEVER, COMBINATION OF P.M. FRASER'S TRIP ABROAD WITH HIS CURRENT VOCAL EMPHASIS ON REVERSING PROTECTIONIST TRENDS. U.S. AND CANADIAN REPRESENTATIONS, AND HAPPY COINCIDENCE OF U.S. BEEF IMPORT RELAXATION ALL CLEARLY EXERT PRESSURES TO COUNTERACT NORMAL AUSTRALIAN INCLINATION TO PROVIDE TARIFF INCREASES FOR ANY DISTRESSED INDUSTRY. WHILE OUTCOME FAR FROM CERTAIN, THERE ARE GROUNDS FOR CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM. SQUIRE

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